

By Congressman David Price in Raleigh, NC -

It's great to see so many people as part of this effort to raise awareness about the threat of climate change and the importance of a clean energy future. Thank you for inviting me to join you.

Continuing to rely on fossil fuels – whether from foreign or domestic sources – will only exacerbate our already dire global warming and air quality problems.

We need to enact a comprehensive federal energy policy that allows our country to move toward energy independence through conservation, efficiency and renewable sources. And we need your advocacy to keep the ball rolling on legislative action.

Under Democratic leadership in Congress, we have already had some success. In late December, Congress passed the Energy Independence and Security Act, which should cut our greenhouse gas emissions by about 25 percent by 2030. This legislation made an historic and long overdue change in fuel economy standards for vehicles. In addition, it increased investments in research on renewable and alternative energy technologies; increased appliance and lighting efficiency standards; enhanced green building standards; and established a green jobs program.

Congress also extended renewable energy tax credits without raising the deficit – by rolling back subsidies to oil and gas companies.

But we must do more, and soon.

We need to enact a Renewable Electricity Standard to require energy companies to provide 15 percent of their power from renewable sources by 2020, and to promote development of a smart power grid that can more efficiently deliver electricity and save consumers money.

We need to renew restrictions on drilling in sensitive offshore areas such as the Outer Banks. The previous moratorium expired on September 30, potentially allowing drilling as close as 3 miles to the shore.

And we need to enact comprehensive legislation to address the threat of climate change.

North Carolina is to be commended for undertaking a proactive effort to reduce air emissions. The Clean Smokestacks Act, which Governor Easley signed into law in 2002, will significantly reduce harmful emissions from North Carolina's coal-fired power plants beyond what is currently required under federal law.

Still, our state is emitting over 152 million metric tons of carbon dioxide annually – that's equal to the emissions of 87 developing countries! And our air quality is affected by pollution from upwind states.

Greenhouse gas emissions simply don't respect state borders, and that's why we must have a comprehensive federal plan to address climate change.

It's a particularly pressing problem for our region, because the Southeast faces significant risks from the impacts of climate change. Current and projected impacts for our region indicate rising sea levels, increasing intensity of hurricanes and storms, enhanced spreading of diseases, and habitat alterations – especially along our coast.

Scientists say we need to reduce our carbon emissions by 80% in the next 50 years. I believe that a cap-and-trade system must be part of the solution and have cosponsored legislation to get it underway. I also want to see greater investments in rail transit – especially in the Southeast – so that we can develop a truly multi-modal transportation infrastructure that provides transportation alternatives to commuters and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

Although we weren't successful in enacting climate change legislation this year, rest assured

that there is support for it in Congress. In fact, 150 of my colleagues just wrote Speaker Pelosi about this very issue. We outlined four principles which we believe should be at the core of a climate change bill:

- (1) use strong science-based targets for near- and long-term emissions reductions;
- (2) promote the transition to a clean energy economy;
- (3) minimize the negative economic impact of any new requirements; and
- (4) provide assistance to those communities and ecosystems that are most vulnerable to global warming.

We need to continue to pressure those who would block progress on climate change solutions – we need leaders who want to be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

Fortunately, both of our presidential candidates agree that global warming poses a serious threat and needs to be tackled immediately with a cap and trade system to reduce carbon emissions. You can be certain that I will work with whoever is elected to meet the challenge of global climate change. The enthusiasm and activism you bring to the table is a source of enormous encouragement, and I'm convinced it will ultimately make the difference.

Again, thank you for joining me today. I look forward to continuing to work with you to address the pressing problem of climate change.